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BULLETIN

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THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

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THE NEW CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

During the summer months, a large section of the capacious basement of Memorial Hall was transformed by the Park Commission into an exhibition hall, well lighted by electricity, in which, according to plans laid out by the Director, Mr. Langdon Warner, before he left us temporarily, has been installed such material as appeared suitable for the purpose of forming the nucleus of what it is hoped to make a Children's Museum.

This includes transportation material of several countries and epochs, represented by actual examples, or by small models both of vehicles and of ships, the latter mainly from Asia. Also some models of dwellings calculated to give children an idea of the workaday life of peoples of other races, and of the manner in which they have solved the problems of existence, as presented to them.

Miss Mary Sinnott's large collection of dolls, including representations of the Papal Court, occupies cases at the northern end of the Museum. These dolls are of various description and nearly all national costumes are represented in the series. The collection will acquire increasing interest as the years go by and gradually national costumes pass out of use if not of existence as, indeed, already is the case in many localities. In addition to the Papal and the National series, there are artistic dolls dressed in the height of modern style—some also designed by soldier-artists wounded in the present war, and which represent types—as for instance the Girl from Montmartre, curiously picturesque in her slovenly attire, with her bold face and unkempt red locks. Among the American dolls three are old ones with papier-mâché heads and kid sewed bodies, which made the delight of our venerable grandames when they were children. There are of a later date, French dolls of our own childhood with porcelain heads and woolly blond wigs, and jointed gutta-percha bodies.

A large handsome French doll, presented by Mrs. Sydney E. Hutchinson, was dressed by her mother, Mrs. Stotesbury; and another notable beauty appears in the costume of 1859 with hoopskirt and tulle ball-dress after the style worn by Harriet Lane, when reigning Lady at the White House.

Out of this collection, by filling certain lacunae, a systematically complete history of the doll could be made which would be as interesting to adults as to children.

Next to Miss Sinnott's collection of dolls, has been placed a collection of Mexican muñecos, made by the Indians of the neighboring Republic. This series includes the native occupations of the Mexicans, whether Indians—that is so called “leperos” or the mixed type that represents the middle and governing classes. The bull-fighter, the guerillero are there as well as the humble tortilla-maker and vendor, who sits on her “petate” surrounded by her tools of trade, grinding her corn on her “Metate;” or the charcoal dealer who trots down from the Sierra, his mountain haunt, carrying a pack of his made product, as tall as himself, on his strong, patient back.

It is a fact that these little clay figures are molded and painted by the Indians themselves who never even heard of an art school, although many of them turn out work the realistic accuracy of which would put to shame many of our students.

Across the passage that, like the Pacific Ocean, separates Mexico from Japan, is an interesting series of models of Japanese dwellings, and fortunately the Museum possesses real Japanese figures of the proper size to set off these small houses and give them a homelike, inhabited appearance.

In the Eastern aisle of the hall has been temporarily installed a series of real vehicles ranging from an old chaise, the curious springs of which are made of hard stitched leather, and the entrance to which must have been as difficult to any one save an acrobat, as the biblical eye of a needle—to a London hansom cab of ten years ago, which Mr. John H. McFadden purchased and sent to the Museum to ripen for the benefit of the coming generations. These surely will marvel at the courage of the driver who could be found willing to be responsible at such long range for the good conduct of his horse—the penalty for the shortcomings of which was to him a long fall from his exalted perch—and will ponder over the pluck of the passenger who was ready to stand so close to the unknown beast's hindquarters, with his driver and only protector so entirely out of reach.

There are Japanese palanquins of fine lacquer, and a gaily decked Neapolitan cart and harness, and there is a Norwegian sled and horse, and—well, these old friends in their new abode look like newly found treasures. But in many cases the lacunae are so great and numerous as to prove veritable chasms, and those in charge have to look to the traveling public to assist in filling them.

In my humble opinion, no museum display is of real educational value unless it presents a logical series. It is true that to form consistently complete series with original specimens is often impossible. But missing links may be supplied by models or even by good size photographs or drawings. After all, the educational museum must differ materially in spirit and method from the art gallery, which aims at presenting the highest art that money and opportunity can procure.

The educational museum deals primarily with ideas. As my old friend and early guide, George Brown Goode, head of the Smithsonian Institute and in charge of the U. S. National Museum at Washington, used to say: “The museum of the past (he wrote in 1891) must be set aside, and transformed from a cemetery of bric-a-brac, into a nursery of living thoughts. It must stand with the library and the laboratory as part of the teaching equipment of a

great city and must contribute its share as one of the principal agencies for the enlightenment of the people."

In a museum of industrial art, especially one that is established in a great manufacturing center, we have two functions fused, or at least merged, into one effort. The art taste of the period or of the race is applied to the products of its industries. And this brings to bear upon the subject, historic or ethnic influences which the museum expert is bound to consider if he is to produce an intelligent classification.

I have dwelt perhaps more seriously on these questions, because, as far as I know, most, if not all of the children's museums that have been established so far, have dealt principally, if not entirely, with natural history—and that is science pure and simple. A Children's Museum of Industrial Art, therefore, is a new departure. Whether adapted to a general community or only to its children, a Museum of Industrial Art must consider industry as well as art. It represents virtually what, as early as 1874, Sir Henry Cole, the founder of "the Department of Science and Art," urged upon the British as a necessary adjunct of a nation's educational system.

"A thorough education and a knowledge of science and art are vital to the Nation and to the place it holds at present in the civilized world. Science and art are the life blood of successful production."

Now a child's museum should teach the child more than the story of beautiful things or that of industries—it should teach him, quite unknown to himself, an idea of the logical sequence of things. Classification, too often overlooked even in art museums, cannot be set aside with impunity in a museum of industrial art, as upon it depends an orderly habit of mind which goes by the name of "scholarly," but which in reality means nothing more impressive than the cultivation of the quality of intellectual order, and of the sequence of things, the seeking of cause and effect, which leads to logical conclusions.

It seems to me that a child's museum, more than—certainly, as much as—any other, should possess that quality and that to it, more than to any other, does the axiom of the most intelligent museum man I have ever known, apply:

"An efficient educational museum may be described as a collection of instructive labels, each illustrated by a well-selected specimen."

The reason why most museums fail in educational value is precisely because they are made up of objects brought together more or less haphazard, quite irrespective of a plan, and that, of course, however valuable each object may be, their collecting leads nowhere.

The objects exhibited in a museum should be in groups, in systematic sequence, so that they may have a collective as well as an individual significance, thus affording a chance to cultivate powers of observation and become a stimulant to intellectual activity.

To return from theory to practice: The Children's Museum about to be opened, offers great possibilities which, if handled adequately, will result in an unique and invaluable educational instrument in this community. To complete such a museum as can only be indicated with the present material at hand, must cost some money. The traveling public, however, doubtless

could help materially in adding much from its superfluous stores as well as by bearing in mind the needs of the Museum, while in distant lands.

What is needed just now, is a definite plan toward the carrying out of which both those in charge and the community, once it understands the needs, may work. Above all do not get discouraged by the incompleteness of the present beginning, and remember that "a finished museum is a dead museum," and a dead museum is more useless than a dead horse.

S. Y. S.



SARACEN INLAID METAL WORK

While much, and, indeed, much good, metal work is done now-a-days, one conspicuously beautiful branch of this craft has been strangely neglected. This is a method of inlaying and engraving practiced by the medieval Saracens and popularly, but erroneously, known as Damascening. It is in the hope of encouraging its revival that I wish to draw attention to the examples, few in number and unfortunately not of the finest quality, of this splendid art, in the Pennsylvania Museum. I will use some of these, however, as illustrations to a brief account of the history and technique of this process.

The art of inlaying metal in metal is of great antiquity; one need only recall the superb weapons of bronze from Mycenæ and Egypt, dating from between 2000 and 1000 B. C. to realize that the craft, of which they are such consummate examples, must be even more ancient than this remote time.

But the manifestation of it with which we are concerned is from two to three thousand years younger still.

In Mesopotamia in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries enough of the ancient tradition of this and many other arts had survived the iconoclastic deluge of the Moslem conquest (in about 625 A. D.) to respond to the stimulus provided by the overthrow of the Kalifate by the less bigotedly religious Turks. Under these last the steady growth of the more liberal of the two great Mohammedan Sects—the Shi'ite permitted the use of human and animal figures in the arts and the perennial skill in craftsmanship of the Persian and Mesopotamian peoples revived.

The earliest examples of Saracen inlaid metal work known to us are from Mosûl on the upper Tigris. They are probably not earlier than the thirteenth century although one or two pieces in which this technique appears, sparingly employed, are dated 1159 and 1190 A. D. One of the most splendid examples is in the British Museum and is dated 1232 A. D. The finest work ceased to be made by the end of the fourteenth century.

The chief characteristic of the Mosûl style is the predominance of the figures of men and animals. The lavish use of silver for inlay is its most conspicuous feature, technically; gold is rarely if ever used, though red copper is, occasionally. The brass or copper base is often entirely covered with the more precious metal and the intervening spaces are generally filled with a black bituminous composition.

In about 1255, possibly as a result of the Mongol invasion, the art suffered a brief eclipse and probably about this time many craftsmen emigrated to